

Life Expectancy

A well-maintained overhead system has a life expectancy of more than 50 years, primarily because individual components are easy to replace. The life expectancy of underground cable installed today is thought to be greater than 30 years. However, other components of the system, such as surface-mounted equipment, may have less than 30 years of useful life.

Capital Costs

In order to determine the range of costs and labor requirements associated with various types of undergrounding projects, the Public Staff obtained cost estimates from each of the Utilities for a variety of underground conversion projects, as well as the costs and labor requirements for the installation of underground lines in a residential subdivision and a commercial shopping center project on a previously undeveloped, or “greenfield,” site. The types of projects included an urban downtown district, a suburban commercial area, a suburban residential area, a rural bulk feeder circuit, a rural tap circuit, and residential service drops in suburban and rural areas.

To ensure that the cost estimates were based on realistic conditions, actual facilities maps were provided to the Utilities. Each map illustrated the size, location and density for the undergrounding project. For consistency several of the possible assumptions associated with each type of project were also provided. Those assumptions are listed in Appendix A. Each utility based its estimates on typical design and construction practices as well as field conditions in its franchised service territory. The cost estimate ranges for conversion projects are shown in Table 2, the labor